

THEY KNOW NOT HOW TO DRESS

Note—Miss Vanbrough has been called the best dressed actress on the English stage.

WOMEN do not know how to dress. In Paris, London, New York, everywhere it is the same. Modern clothes are absurd. They are uncomfortable and unhygienic. Frequently they are hideous. Yet all women wear them. Why? Because fashions are like laws and conventions. We must follow them or be outlaws and radicals.

Yet I am sure that some day some women will be courageous enough to defy fashion and clever enough to evolve a costume that will be both sensible and charming. It never has been done, but the styles are growing worse and worse every year, and something must be done very soon.

Men understand the art of dressing much better than women. They have

Violet Vanbrough, the English Actress, Assails Her Sex for Following Whims of Fashion Blindly—Sensible Clothes More Important Than the Right to Vote

out of the way the gown is up to my knees. Sometimes I forget and then there is a terrible moment while I hurry into my coat until these four trains are released.

And this same season, from the same maker, I have a little Empire gown with straight simple lines, no train at all and no complications. It is an example of how lovely a gown may be

But of all the dreadful things that women wear the long, straight front corset is the worst. It comes down to the knees and the poor unhappy wearer never can sit down. Is that graceful? Every one knows that it is not. It is ugly and it has no excuse at all for being. But when it is the fashion women must wear it.

It seems to me that the whole ten-

lothes certainly do not make for beauty.

It seems to me, perhaps because I know most about it, that the actress suffers most from the complicated, uncomfortable fashions. She has to dress so often. At the close of the performance, when she is tired out, she spends perhaps an hour putting on stiff, uncomfortable clothes and hair—for what? To go straight to her hotel, very often, and have supper sent up to her room.

If she had a simple little gown that could be buttoned up the front in a few moments how much time and energy and peace of mind she would be saved. But to look presentable at all she must be in the fashion, and to be in the fashion she must wear a long, stiff corset, a gown that looks in all the places one least expects, do up her hair in puffs and curls with thousands of hairpins that pull and hurt, pin on a heavy hat with long pins that stick into her head and into other people's eyes and force her feet into stiff shoes. Then she hurries home and at once changes them all for a negligee. The pity of it is that a negligee is so lovely and so comfortable and can be worn on so few occasions. I have one little cloth gown this season which is to me a promise of better things, for it fastens in front with big buttons.

There is a way out of this intricate maze of fashions and it will be a wonderful thing for the woman who finds it. I have thought sometimes I would try it myself when I go back to Paris and have time to work out some ideas in detail. The woman who attempts this must have, among other things, plenty of time, for it will be no child's play to invent a costume so lovely that women will give up the changing modes which they have followed slavishly since the days of Eden and fig leaves and cling to one style that would not change from year to year any more than the style of men's clothes.

The ideal style would be one that could not hurt merchants, manufacturers, modistes or couturiers, for there would always be an infinite variety of fabrics and colors, and it takes as much art to make a simple gown charming as to create an elaborate one. To make a small hat chic and becoming is far more difficult than to trim a large hat with plumes and flowers. I might even then have to pay ten guineas for hats in a single month, as I did the last month I was in Paris.

In one way it may be easier for the actress than for other women to lead the way in the crusade against modern styles, for she has more opportunities to exhibit her gowns.

It seems a little strange that when men and women were created so nearly at the same time the man has arrived so long before the woman at an understanding of how to dress. He has found and settled upon a comfortable, cleanly and hygienic fashion of dress, while she is yet a long way from anything of the kind.

In these days when women are trying to do so many things that men do I wonder why they do not follow their example where it would do the most good. Women talk about the disadvantages of being a woman, of the freedom of men, and make no effort to adopt the one thing which would give them nine-tenths of the advantage and the freedom they covet, and which no one would have any thought of denying them.

Women wouldn't have to throw stones and break windows and make talk on the street corners to be allowed to dress—not like men, but as wisely. And it seems to me that this is a matter of far more importance than the thing they are making such a hue and cry about. I wish women would learn how to dress before they make such a fuss about voting. I don't know why women want to vote—many do not understand it. But all women in their inner hearts realize the importance of clothes. The more successful and happy a woman is in the world the more thoroughly has she realized it.



CHARLES FROHMAN LOOKING RIGHT AT YOU

For the First Time in Many Years There Is Here Published an Actual Photograph of the Famous Manager.

When women have learned how to make their clothes an almost unconscious expression of themselves, and they no longer make freaks of themselves, no longer make themselves wretched and sometimes ill because of the tyranny of fashion, then there will be very little that it will be necessary for them to ask for. They will hold the world in their hands. They will not need a vote any more than a nightingale needs a voice teacher.

But I am sure women never will do men's work in the world or control the affairs of nations until they learn to dress as sanely as men.

They will learn in time, for they are learning everything else. The marvel is that it takes so much time, and in most

of the things women learn to do they are hampered by their clothes. We have women doctors, lawyers, chauffeurs—and what would a woman chauffeur do if her machine broke and she had four trains on her gown?

An important matter in dress which many women do not fully understand is dressing for the special occasion—wearing little hats for morning, short skirts for walking, trailing gowns (just one train) in the house—everything where it belongs and is prettiest. Surely for instance not a white tailored gown in the winter; with snow it is all wrong, and surely not a tailored gown of any kind for supper and more than a ball gown for shopping in the morning. I have seen women at supper parties in

restaurants wearing white tailored gowns and thinking they were dressed up because the dress was white. I have seen women wearing white shoes on the street in winter; I have seen evening gowns worn to luncheon. I can't understand it.

For centuries women have been devoting themselves to this subject of dress. Sometimes we are laughed at for it, sometimes applauded. Some women have tried to disdain the question of clothes and straightway they have lost something, at least of their influence. Wise women from the beginning of time have recognized the value of clothes. And after all these generations of thought and care we have achieved—what?

There have been very few periods in the world's history when there was not something about the clothes of the fashionable woman that was ridiculous, but I am convinced that the styles in that respect are growing worse each year. They seem to grow worse as woman's need of freedom in her clothes grows greater. In the days when all women either wore the easy garb of the peasant, or were carefully sheltered, never putting their feet on the ground or lifting their lily white fingers for any more arduous labor than embroidering silk or playing the spinet, all that was necessary about their clothes was that they should be beautiful. It made no difference whether they were comfortable or healthful. It wasn't nice for a woman to be too healthy. But in these twentieth century days when all the women are doing something it is very different, or should be.

If you think for a moment that we are making great progress and that the modern gowns and hats and shoes do not need immediate attention, look with seeing, unprejudiced eyes at the next fashionably gowned woman you meet, and then to gaze upon some old fashioned French or English print in which women wear little empire gowns that follow the lines of the figure without hampering it and have their hair caught loosely with a ribbon.

How do you think pictures of the women of to-day will look to people a hundred years from now?

GILDING THE DESERT

Those who have lived in Egypt will find a source of unending surprise in the scenic offerings of "high class vaudeville" which accompany the throaty howling by a near byrnone of "I shall love you till the Hot Desert Freezes Eternally." Illustrated with pictures from the East is a well in Egyptian scenery he has certainly surpassed himself, for you behold great clusters of pyramids, sphinxes by the dozen, camels, horses, sheep, donkeys, ostriches and even elephants crossing the soft sand of the alleged desert or resting beneath the English oaks, Lombardy poplars, cactus and palm trees.

And before you can get your breath a gallant knight in the uniform of the Austrian Hussars, covered with a kimono and a scimitar stuck in his belt, brings his sultana into the moonlight and hugs her until the everlasting desert is removed and the applause of the audience freezes over.



MISS VIOLET VANBROUGH AND A LAUGHING VISITOR

their hair cut close so that it is easily kept clean. Their clothes do not hamper their movements. They have pockets for their handkerchiefs and their money. They have plenty of pockets. They have no pins in their hair and no pins in their hats. When the wind blows they wear little caps pulled down on their heads.

Do you think a man would ever get anywhere if he went in high heeled shoes, holding on his hat with one hand and holding up his train with the other—with a hatpin sticking into his head on one side and a hairpin on the other?

I have seen women riding on motor cars and wearing great plumed hats that no number of pins could keep safe. They cling to them frantically with both hands. They tie them on with big veils that fly into their eyes and get into their mouths, and they screw up their faces wondering whether the wind will break their plumes. Do they enjoy the ride? Why do they go? Or why don't they dress for it?

Big hats are not comfortable. Yet all women wear them. I myself have worn hats that were anything but comfortable. They tie them on with big veils that fly into their eyes and get into their mouths, and they screw up their faces wondering whether the wind will break their plumes. Do they enjoy the ride? Why do they go? Or why don't they dress for it?

The elaborate coiffure a woman wears is a dreadful thing. Masses of puffs and curls pinned on over her own hair—is that healthful? Every one knows that it is not. The coiffure must be responsible for many headaches.

And the gowns? The poor women are tumbling and falling around because they cannot move in the tight skirts. They cannot walk. They cannot step up into an omnibus. What can they do? One hears of many accidents because of these tight skirts. Yet women wear them. It cannot be because they like to be uncomfortable and always in danger. They are afraid to defy the fashion and no one has shown them clothes that were both sensible and pretty.

In Paris they tried to introduce the pantalon skirt, but women would not have it. They do not want to dress like men. They resent anything that tends toward mannishness. So they cling to their hobble skirts and trains and high heels and big hats. It will go on indefinitely until some Parisienne finds a way to be pretty and dainty and very feminine without being at the same time tortured and unhygienic.

This season with a greater variety to choose from women still are wearing the difficult gowns. They wear narrow gowns so marvelously built that even with the most expert maid it takes ages to get into them. And women buy and wear these absurdities even when there are simple, exquisite creations right beside them. They are afraid not to follow the fashion—even when it has four trains!

Imagine any one thinking of a gown with four trains! But I have one this season—a lovely dinner gown, all lace and embroidery and chiffon and—four trains. When I go out to get into the motor everything has to wait while I pick up all my trains. I never know where they are. I can't even hold them up because the skirt is so tight. So I pin them up under my coat and when I arrive I have to remember to unpin them before I take my coat off, for when they are pinned safely

when it is built on a perfectly simple pattern. It is of blue chiffon, with a high waist, both skirt and waist embroidered in tiny diamonds and pearls over white chiffon and Chantilly lace, with a foundation of white silk edged with ermine. It is just as rich and beautiful as the other, but I can put it on and forget it. There are no four trains to hunt for and pin out of the way.

density of modern fashions is not to make women beautiful, but only to martyr them. Their bodies are tired out with these same tight, stiff corsets and with the weight of the clothes they wear. Through one whole scene of a play I wear a gown which a strong man finds difficult to hold at arm's length for a few minutes. When a woman is worn out with the burden of her clothes her face is haggard and tired. Modern

The card announcing his arrival is already posted. It reads, "Mail your Christmas parcels early." Below is the schedule of foreign mail, the first which Santa Claus is called upon to handle. It is a series of positively last moments if the package is to catch the reindeer express on Christmas eve.

By December 15 Santa Claus will have taken up his quarters in the post office. His first station is behind the foreign money order window. In December, 1910, he received and delivered to foreign countries \$7,025,438 through the New York post office, the gathering port of foreign mail. From Italy to Norway and from Persia to Japan he scattered the pink slips.

On December 15 the incoming wave arrives. It brings few money orders. There are thousands of postal cards, hundreds of packages of the old time sweets and lots of socks, mittens and mufflers, patiently knitted in the fear that the winds of the new world may be bleak though its gold be plenty.

Great is the rivalry of the big ships that bring the Christmas mail. Ordinarily each carries about 2,000 bags of mail containing 5,500 letters apiece. But during the ten days before Christmas the average jumps to 5,000 bags for each steamer. Last year the Oceanic was the Santa Claus ship, carrying 5,829 sacks, the heaviest load of mail ever brought into New York harbor.

Santa Claus has plenty of help. Pneumatic tubes shoot the letters from one overworked substation to another less busy, where the letters are faced, cancelled and sent back for delivery. Mail clerks are transferred from the financial district, where business is light during the holidays.

As Christmas Day draws near and the rush of local mail begins, Santa Claus mounts to a corner of the post office where the public never penetrates, for nobody is admitted without a pass. Santa Claus reaches the fifth floor without one, however, and with him go fifteen or twenty new clerks to join the fifty already at work, for this is the place where missing letters go. From all the collection points in the city they pour in at the rate of 400 or 500 a day, without addresses, without stamps, without sufficient twine or wrapping paper.

"Many hundreds of letters are posted properly stamped and addressed except that they are marked simply 'City,' instead of having their own proper destination," says W. H. Chase, superintendent of the inquiry and missing mail department. "But many of our clerks know most of the streets of all the principal cities of the United States, so the city and State are readily supplied, except when several cities have streets with the same name. Then we have to try one city after another."

"Not to be opened until Christmas," to be written on any package without any extra charge. But the effort to get people to shop early isn't appreciated as it should be.

"One branch of our mail no clerk in the department would want to see less by a single letter. That is Santa Claus's own mail. It's sometimes directed to the North Pole, but most of the little folks are content to believe that he lives right here in the city. Three years ago we were able

department were unable to identify. Valuable to the extent of \$60,000 were sold at public auction. Many of these were packages from department stores mailed in the envelopes in which they had been wrapped and insufficiently addressed and sealed. The packages are always sold "blind" and the Post Office auctions are lotteries. Two young men once wandered into one of these sales and bought packages of the same size and shape. One found him-

self the possessor of a lot of letterhead stationery belonging to a man in Iowa, while the other had a case of flat silver.

One class of mail which never gets beyond the New York office is the tinsel post cards. The flimsy envelopes in which they are sold soon wear out, and the cards are then thrown out of the mail, since they are forbidden transportation on account of danger to the hands of the clerks. Other cards literally by the million are safely delivered, for the Christmas postal card seems to be taking the place of the more expensive gift.

When the sender's name and address are on the outside he is notified. If we could send one word of warning to Christmas givers, it would be, "Put your name and address on everything."

"If people would read over what they have written, would use wooden instead of pasteboard boxes, and good wrapping paper and stout twine, which is better than hempen cord because it is softer, our 1,800 packages of misdirected mail per day would be cut in half. And if people could be induced to have their packages done up a week before Christmas and weighed at a store if the post office is busy, most of the other half would be accounted for."

"The Government permits the words,

to deliver it in person, for the charitable organizations took charge of it and filled such requests as they were able to investigate. We were almost snowed under with letters the next year, but since then it has been falling off, and last year amounted to only about 2,000. We are all sorry."

The letters cannot be opened without special permission from Washington, and it is there in the Dead Letter Office that Santa Claus takes his place after Christmas is over. Last year more than 100,000 letters and 17,000 packages were received in January-Christmas mail. These were returned to the senders whenever possible, but most of them went to join the 11,000,000 letters and the packages which the



DISTRIBUTION OF CHRISTMAS MAIL.

WHERE THE MAIL IS "HURRIED UP."